

MONTANA CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY CENTER POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

Policy Subject: Unexpected Death	
Policy Number: MNP 16	Standards/Statutes: ARM 37.27.130 MCA 53-24-208
Effective Date: 01/01/02	Page 1 of 2

PURPOSE:

To provide guidelines in the event of an unexpected death with in the facility.

POLICY:

All deaths at MCDC are considered unexpected deaths and will be handled according to law.

PROCEDURE:

In the event of an unexpected medical situation that results in a patient's death, the following will occur:

- I. If a staff member discovers a patient that appears to be lifeless, the charge nurse should be immediately called.
- II. The nurse will immediately assess the patient and take action according to the situation. Action taken will depend on the situation. It includes but is not limited to securing a safe environment, taking vital signs, assessing skin color and skin temperature, assessing response to external stimuli, and assessing pupil reaction.
- III. If the assessment reveals any signs of life or possibility of revival, basic life support/emergency medical care will be immediately initiated. If the nurse that the patient has been long dead and there is no possibility of revival assesses it, the nurse will make the decision not to begin basic life support.
- IV. 911 will be called with a description of the situation. In the case of an unexpected death, it is Butte Silver Bow Police Department policy to dispatch A-1 Ambulance, the Fire Department, and the shift commander from Butte Silver Bow Police Department to the scene. The police officer then notifies the coroner. In accordance with state law, all cases of unusual, unexpected, or unexplained deaths must be reported to the Silver Bow County coroner. Any death that occurs at MCDC will be reported to the coroner.
- V. The coroner will be in charge of pronouncing the person dead and of making decisions regarding the

disposition of the body.

VI. The physician on call and the Administrator should be called as soon as possible.

VII. Both the coroner and the police department will conduct an investigation regarding the death. Other than securing a safe environment, the body and surrounding area should not be disturbed until the coroner and/or the Butte Silver Bow police investigate the situation. With permission from the coroner, the nursing staff will provide care to the body. This includes cleaning the body and the linen, dressing the body in clean clothes, bagging and labeling all patient belongings.

VIII. The physician is responsible for notifying the next of kin or may assign the charge nurse this responsibility.

IX. The nurse will document all events surrounding the death of the patient in the patient's chart, including any relevant situations leading up to the patient's death and the assessment and care given to the patient, with exact times and dates.

X. It will be the recommendation of this facility that an autopsy be performed, but it will be the coroner's decision if it is to take place.

A. If an autopsy is performed, a provisional diagnosis shall be recorded in the patient's medical record within 72 hours.

B. A copy of the autopsy shall be requested and become a part of the record.

XI. A summation statement will be completed by the physician and entered into the record in the form of a discharge summary. It will include all known circumstances leading to death and shall be signed by the attending physician.

Revisions:

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